
RECOMMENDATION FOR THE PROPOSAL TO LICENSE MEDICAL DENTURISTS

Preliminary Recommendation of the Joint Sunset Review Committee (JLSRC)

ISSUE. (LICENSE MEDICAL DENTURISTS?) Should the State administer a new licensing and regulatory program for medical denturists?

Recommendation: *At this time, there appears to be insufficient justification to license medical denturists.*

Comments: Currently, California law does not require licensing of medical denturists or denturists. California statute dictates that consumers in need of either full or partial dentures receive them through dentists. California has five accredited dental schools training dentists which provide their students with didactic, laboratory, and clinical instruction related to complete dentures, removable partial dentures, and dentures supported and/or retained by dental implants. Many Californians require or will require denture services. A 1999 study by the National Oral Health Surveillance System (NOHSS), a collaborative effort between Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Division of Oral Health and The Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD), estimated that 18.5% of Californians (ages 65 and older) have lost all natural permanent teeth. This is slightly less than the study's national estimate that 24.4% of American adults over age 65, almost three of every 10, have lost all of their teeth because of cavities and gum disease. As the aging population in California grows, the need for denture services grows with it. To deal with this growing need, consumers should have adequately prepared and licensed professionals to provide these services.

Admittedly, the dentures and related services provided by dentists and prosthodontists can have a significant impact on the lives of their patients. The effects are far more than just cosmetic. Loss of all natural teeth can contribute to a person's psychological, social, and physical impairment. Even when missing teeth are replaced with well-constructed dentures, there may be limitations in speech, chewing ability, taste perception, and quality of life.

Denture services are currently being offered by licensed, well-trained professionals, who can make a knowledgeable fitting and provide sufficient care to patients. The JLSRC has not heard from any consumers supporting the need for licensure of medical denturists in California. The lack of consumer complaints suggests a lack of significant consumer harm or dissatisfaction.